

**Alzheimer's Disease Association releases research report on  
"Impact of the Arts & Dementia Programme"**

*Implementing non-pharmacological arts-based programmes for those with dementia have proven positive outcomes, along with a progressive shift in societal attitudes towards dementia.*

- A total of 165 people comprising 44 persons with dementia, 46 caregivers, and 75 members of the community participated in the research.
- Across its six community-based art activities under the Arts & Dementia programme, higher mood and engagement in persons with dementia were observed, signifying that such programmes create a safe space for self-discovery, interaction and growth.
- All caregivers interviewed were satisfied with the positive effects of the programme on their loved ones with dementia, which offered temporary respite and made caregiving easier and more manageable.
- Artists and volunteers who participated in the Arts & Dementia programme reported more positive attitudes towards those with dementia compared to new volunteers.

**3 December 2019, Singapore** – Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA), Singapore's leading social service agency in specialised dementia care, has released a research report titled "*Impact of the Arts & Dementia Programme*". This research project was made possible with the support of the National Arts Council (NAC).

The report presents the findings of an evidence-based, qualitative research study to evaluate the impact of the Arts & Dementia programme offered by ADA. This programme takes on a non-pharmacological approach to instil a sense of social inclusion and empowerment, and is currently available for persons with dementia attending ADA's daycare services.

The Arts & Dementia programme consists of six community-based art activities:

Genre	Activities
• Visual art-appreciation & reminiscence	• <i>Let's Explore Peranakan Museum</i> • <i>A Walk through Kampong Gelam</i>
• Photography	• <i>Take a Photo with Me</i>
• Art-making (Pottery)	• <i>Mould Your Dream</i>
• Movement & Music	• <i>Memories Café</i> • <i>Sing Out Loud!</i>

One in 10 people aged 60 and above in Singapore has dementia, with the condition affecting half of those above 85. In 2018, there are an estimate of 82,000 cases locally and this number is expected to go beyond 100,000 by 2030.

The prevalence of dementia in Singapore has prompted care practitioners and researchers to explore beyond pharmacological treatments and seek practical approaches to maintain the quality of life for those living with dementia and their caregivers.

“ADA is thankful to NAC for supporting this research, so that we can measure how this programme has enriched the lives of people living with dementia since 2013,” said Mrs Theresa Lee, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of ADA. Mrs Lee is also the co-investigator of this research.

#### Impact of Arts on Persons with Dementia

“While arts-based activities do not cure dementia, these non-pharmacological interventions are helpful alternatives as they tap on the person-centred approach. It looks beyond the problems and difficulties and focuses on the abilities of individuals. This enhances social inclusion and quality of life,” shared Mrs Lee.

Building upon the foundation of Person-Centred Care (PCC), arts-related programmes have the potential to maintain the well-being of persons living with dementia. There is an increased stimulation through enriching and purposeful engagement; leading to elevated positive emotional responses and reduced agitation.

#### Impact of Arts on Caregiving Journeys

Caregivers of persons with dementia have also shared that such activities have enabled them to apply arts as an effective communication tool with their loved ones.

By observing how their loved ones with dementia interact with others through the exhibits, stories and photographic activities, caregivers have learnt meaningful and creative ways of engaging with their personal interests and past life experiences. Such interactions have strengthened the bond and understanding between them.

“Some caregivers have told us that this programme has offered them meaningful respite and made caregiving more manageable. Seeing their loved ones engaged and contented through the day has brought significant relief and less guilt of having to leave their loved ones in alternative care,” Mrs Lee added.

#### Impact of Arts in the Community

The research has also found that artists and volunteers who participated in the Arts & Dementia programme had more positive attitudes towards dementia compared to new volunteers who had not been exposed to the programme.

“The increase in positive attitudes towards people living with dementia among the volunteers involved in this Arts & Dementia programme is an important finding from our research study,” shared Dr Donald Yeo, co-investigator of this research. He is also a Clinical Neuropsychologist and Associate Trainer with ADA.

However, he noted that the perceptions of the general public are important and more needs to be done to enhance dementia awareness.

“A caregiver once shared that she has been trying to engage an art, music or yoga teacher for her loved one with dementia but she has been unsuccessful in finding a suitable artist because they are resistant to engage with a person with dementia,” he added.

Ms Chua Ai Liang, Senior Director of Engagement and Participation at NAC, said: “NAC is delighted with the positive research findings on the impact and benefits that arts programmes have in enhancing a sense of wellness for persons with dementia. The Council embraces the continued exploration on how arts can better improve the lives of Singaporeans.”

### **Arts & Dementia Programme goes beyond ADA’s Walls**

With positive evidenced-based outcomes, in recent months, ADA piloted a programme known as “*Journey with Arts & Dementia*” (JADe). Supported by the Chua Foundation, this capability-building project aims to train individuals to spearhead and lead in various reminiscence engagements for persons with cognitive impairment and dementia.

“It is our commitment to find ways to involve the community on the use of arts and reminiscence engagements to benefit more persons with dementia and families. Thus, we can help to alleviate their stressors despite dementia,” emphasised Mrs Lee.

More information on JADe programme will be available in the coming months.

Download “Impact of the Arts & Dementia Programme” Executive Summary and Infographics here: <http://alz.org.sg/arts-dementia-programme/>

### Compliments on the Arts & Dementia Programme

**Mr Goh Buck Leng, 51 years old, caregiver** commented how he feels less guilty in leaving his father in alternative care. “Initially, I kept blaming myself that I was not spending enough time with him...but communication with him is different now. Watching him perform on stage made me realise how happy he is with a sense of purpose.”

**Ms Licia Sucipto, 35 years old, volunteer** shared about how she has learnt more about dementia. “I had thought that it would be difficult to interact with dementia clients because I wouldn’t know the right things to say or the right way to interact, I had thought that all levels of dementia were the same. Now, I understand that it exists as a spectrum, and there are so many ways to interact with and befriend these clients.”

**Mr Stanley Koh, 48 years old, Artist**, shared how there were meaningful interactions and conversations forged during the programme. “Photography is only a tool for me to engage them. At the end of the day, whether they take good photos, it is not essential.”

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## **About Arts & Dementia programme**

First developed in 2013, with the support from the National Arts Council (NAC), ADA offers a series of community-based arts programmes to enhance the quality of life for persons with dementia. These include creative arts activities, such as visual art-appreciation, art-making, photography, movement and dance, music and singing.

Objectives of the Arts & Dementia programme:

- To use arts as a platform to engage and enrich the lives of people with dementia in creative arts activities, connect them with their past experiences and to gain new skills
- To enhance the caregiving experience and relationship between caregivers and their loved ones with dementia
- To reduce stigma and promote a supportive and inclusive environment in the community

For more information on ADA's Arts & Dementia programme:

<https://alz.org.sg/arts-dementia-programme/>

## **About Alzheimer's Disease Association**

Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA) was formed in 1990 because of a growing concern for the needs of persons living with dementia and their caregivers. The Association hopes to reduce stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of dementia; enabling and involving persons living with dementia to be integrated and accepted in the community; and leading in the quality of dementia care services for persons living with dementia and their families.

Striving towards a dementia inclusive society through our four strategic service pillars; Centre-Based Care, Caregiver Support, Academy and Community Enabling, ADA aims to advocate and inspire the society to regard and respect persons living with dementia as individuals who can still lead purposeful and meaningful lives. For more information, visit <http://alz.org.sg/>

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. **When was this research conducted?**

The report is based on the research conducted between May 2018 and June 2019, which includes six community-based art activities: Let's Explore Peranakan Museum, A Walk through Kampong Gelam, Mould Your Dream, Take a Photo with Me, Sing Out Loud!, and the Memories Café.

### 2. **Who else were involved in this research?**

A total of 165 participants were involved in the research: 44 persons with dementia, 46 caregivers and 75 volunteers and artists.

### 3. **How many regular artists and volunteers are involved in Arts & Dementia programme in a year?**

On average, 65 regular volunteers and 5 artists are involved in Arts & Dementia programme.

### 4. **How many persons with dementia take part in Arts & Dementia programme in a year?**

On average, 120 clients take part in the Arts & Dementia programme.

### 5. **Has there been a similar study done in any other part of the world or Asia?**

Yes, similar studies have been done in the U.K., such as [The MoMA Alzheimer's Project](#). MoMA is one of the first museums in the country to offer programmes specially designed to make its collection and special exhibitions accessible to people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

In Singapore, research was done by the Nanyang Technological University, involving persons with dementia at one of ADA daycare centres. The report "[Connecting reminiscence, art making and cultural heritage: A pilot art-for-dementia care programme](#)" was published in 2018 and it focused on finding effectiveness on the combination of reminiscence with art-making.

A study [aimed to test the efficacy of choral singing](#) and see if it can slow down the development of dementia, was done by National University of Singapore.

While these research studies focused on a singular arts-based activity, this report covered six non-pharmacological arts-based activities.

### 6. **How was the evaluation and/or research done conducted for persons with dementia?**

Two observations tools were used for persons with dementia:

- Dementia Care Mapping was recorded at five-minute intervals throughout the observation period, generating two sets of scores: one evaluated the type of behaviour the participant was mainly engaged in during the five-minute time frame; the second evaluated the state of well-being the participant experiences while engaged in the activity or behaviour.

- The Bradford Well-Being Profile was recorded using a set of behavioural indicators to evaluate the relative state of well-being over time.

**7. In the arts scene, are there any organisations who are stepping up to be dementia-friendly and involving persons with dementia in their programmes?**

Corporations are stepping up to integrate programmes for persons with dementia in Singapore.

For example, the National Museum of Singapore's docents are trained to communicate with persons with dementia. Its monthly tours seek to enable seniors, persons with dementia and their care partners to have an enjoyable time at the museum. Through reminiscence, they can explore artefacts and engage in conversations from stories of yesteryears that they are familiar with.